Introduction
Croatia is situated on the eastern Adriatic Sea coast of the Mediterranean. It is bordered on the north by Slovenia, on the south by Montenegro and shares landlocked borders with Hungary, Serbia, and Bosnia & Herzegovina. Croatia's total coastline is approximately 5835 km, of which 1800 km are on the mainland. Just offshore nearly 1200 islands line the coast. Much of the coastline is mountainous with small bays, coves and beaches, much of it rocky. There are three Marine Protected Areas, two Nature Parks, two National Parks and four Special Reserves along the Croatian coast.

At Risk Wildlife
Avian Species - the Lastovo Archipelago is an important area for breeding shearwaters and Vransko Lake, which is only separated from the Adriatic by a narrow karst ridge, is an important wintering and nesting area for threatened waterbirds. Species of concern in Croatia include red-breasted and lesser white-fronted geese, ferruginous duck, great snipe, black-winged pratincole, black-tailed godwit, Eurasian and slender-billed curlew, Dalmatian pelican, Yelkouan shearwater and velvet scoter.

Marine mammals – there is a resident population of bottlenose dolphins in the Adriatic and other cetaceans are occasionally seen. The critically endangered Mediterranean monk seal has been regularly reported in Croatian waters but there is no evidence of a breeding population.

Marine Reptiles - Loggerhead sea turtles are present in the Adriatic year round with leatherback and green turtles seen occasionally, more often in the southern Adriatic, but no sea turtles nest in the Adriatic.

Regional Seas
Adriatic Sea (Mediterranean Sea).

Past experience
There have been no major spills in Croatia. In 1984 the Brigitta Montanari sank off Sibenik with some release of vinyl chloride. No wildlife response was reported for this incident.

Response: the role of the authorities
A National Contingency Plan (NCP) was agreed in 2008 with the Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Transport and Infrastructure having overall responsibility for oil spill management and oversight of response at sea. Under the leadership of the Ministry of Maritime Affairs, Transport and Infrastructure, participants in the Contingency Plan include the Headquarters, the Maritime Rescue Coordination Centre and County Operational Centres. The Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection participates in Headquarters activities and within one of the County Operational Centres. The Ministry of Defence responds on shore. Each maritime county takes responsibility for smaller incidents in their jurisdiction with the centre at Rijeka (Primorsko-Goranska County) taking charge of incidents of national significance.
This plan is scheduled for revision in 2015-2016.

Oiled wildlife response
Formal guidelines?
There are no formal guidelines for oiled wildlife response and no specific information on how wildlife would be protected. The recent interest in oiled wildlife created by the POSOW training project may result in wildlife response being discussed for inclusion in the revised NCP. Sensitivity maps are in place to indicate special protected areas, which would potentially receive priority in the case of an incident.

Response objectives and strategy
There are no stated response objectives or strategies in any government documents for oil spill response.

Euthanasia or rehabilitation?
While no formal guidelines exist, the recent interest in and support of training for oiled wildlife response indicates that rehabilitation would be allowed.

Impact assessment
According to REMPEC documents, three groups are involved in monitoring impact on wildlife: the Institute Rudjer Boskovic at The Centre for Marine Research, the Institute of Oceanography and Fisheries and the Institute for Marine and Coastal Research at the University of Dubrovnik. The Directorate for Environmental Impact Assessment and Sustainable Waste Management of the Ministry of Environmental and Nature Protection would likely oversee this aspect of response.

Notification and early response
There is no system in place for notification of and early response to oil affected wildlife.

Wildlife responders
The Blue World Institute for Marine Research and Conservation rehabilitates sea turtles at its centre on Lošinj Island, which is the focal point for year round research. It also has seasonal (May to September) research centres on Murter and Vis Islands, however the group has no direct experience of oiled wildlife response.
The Birds of Prey Conservation Centre (Centar za zaštitu ptica grabljivica) would likely be involved in response for birds of prey, particularly on the coastal islands where they have a rehabilitation facility, and would likely be involved in any post-release monitoring of these species as they have experience ringing and monitoring griffon vultures. They have no experience in oiled wildlife response.
See “Current Processes” for information on recent Tier 1 oiled wildlife training in Croatia. Participants and organisations involved in this training may be able to assist with initial response until experienced personnel from other parts of Europe could be brought in to oversee the full rehabilitation process. There are individuals with some more extensive training in oiled wildlife response.

Cooperation between stakeholders
There is an Adriatic Training and Research Centre (ATRAC) in Croatia, established as part of the HAZADR project (Albania, Croatia, Italy, Montenegro and Slovenia), co-financed by the EU, which also funded four POSOW courses in the Adriatic region. NGOs and individuals that participated in the POSOW training, both in Croatia and within the Adriatic region, would likely work together in the event of a spill affecting wildlife.
The HAZADR project is also concerned with harmonizing oil spill contingency plans within the region, allowing for better joint response.
Croatia is a signatory to the Barcelona Convention and a tripartite sub-regional agreement with Italy and Slovenia for the Adriatic, although this agreement has not been activated nor exercised.

Permanent facilities
There are no permanent facilities in Croatia for responding to oiled wildlife and no wildlife hospitals with experience working with aquatic birds.
The Blue World Institute has four pools for sick or injured turtles at its rescue centre on Lošinj Island but no specific equipment for responding to oiled turtles or cetaceans and no holding facilities for cetaceans.
The Birds of Prey Conservation Centre in Crnika has facilities to care for a number of birds of prey but does not have any specialized equipment for, nor any experience in caring for, oiled birds.

Current processes
In 2013, staff from the National Protection and Rescue Directorate (DUZS), the Research Educational Centre for the Protection of Griffon Vultures and Nature (Grifoncentar) and the Association for Nature, Environment and Sustainable Development (SUNCE) completed the Train the Trainer POSOW course. As a result, 32 people completed the POSOW course on Wildlife Response in 2013. In 2015 an additional 20 people completed the training.
Further POSOW courses are planned in 2016-2017. The ATRAC facility will be used by Croatia and other Adriatic nations and regions, as a national training facility for oil spill response.

Documentation and references
General references
Birdlife International Country Profile
ITOPF Country Profile
REMPEC Country Profile
Croatia Contingency Plan for Accidental Marine Pollution
Biodiversity of Croatia (State Institute for Nature Protection document)

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